

VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

News Release

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Washington, D.C. -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) turns 10 years old today, marking a decade of growth and profound change for the nation's second largest cabinet agency.

Prior to becoming a cabinet-level department in 1989, the then-Veterans Administration was the largest independent agency. Although it is the most recent agency added to the President's Cabinet, it is surpassed in size only by the Department of Defense, and has a legacy that dates to 1776 when the Continental Congress developed a program to provide pensions to disabled veterans.

"Although we are observing an important milestone as a cabinet department, VA has a proud tradition of service to our nation's veterans that goes back to the origins of our country," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West Jr.

VA as a cabinet department was a goal that few, in and out of government, ever expected would be achieved. In the late 1980s, however, at the urging of veterans' service organizations, Congress responded, passing legislation that became "The Department of Veterans Affairs Act" on Oct. 25, 1988, with an effective date of Mar. 15, 1989. President Bush hailed the creation of the new cabinet-level department in a ceremony held that day on the South Lawn of the White House and said, "There is only one place for the veterans of America and that place is in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States."